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Our own prairies afforded evidence of the soundness of these views. There would often be seen elevated peninsular-like arms stretching from the woody area into the grassy basins, or even little islands of elevated ground in the midst of the flat sea of soddy land, covered by trees of various kinds. These elevations by reason of drouth, lighter soil, or other special conditions, were unfavorable for the growth of the thick mass of herbaceous vegetation that possessed the land below. The seeds could not only sprout and become trees, but the absence of much grassy undergrowth saved them from serious effects from fire on lower prairie ground.

There could be no doubt these considerations fully accounted for the perpetuity of the grassy areas, and the inability of the forests to encroach thereon.

If we are now asked how these extensive areas were given over to grass in the first place, we may safely reply that the trees were not there to dispute with it for the possession of the ground, or they would have conquered. We may imagine the prairie region as in a state of transition from the paludose to the limose state, with ligneous or arborescent vegetation on the higher lands, many miles away. The tufty grasses would undoubtedly take possession long before their woody neighbors could come down from the hills and spy out the land. The struggle for life would be at the boundaries where the two forces met. The trees could not gain rapid advances, but by the overshadowing of their branches would weaken the grass beneath, and thus, by slow approaches, gradually conquer their weaker neighbors. In meadows, where cattle kept the coarse grass down, or where briars or light bushes kept tough grass from spreading, or where the ground was too gravelly or sandy or the native grasses not of a close tufty character, trees found no obstruction whatever in their endeavor to take possession of the soil.

DECEMBER 13.

The President, Dr. JOS. LEIDY, in the chair.

Twenty-three persons present.

Bot-larvae in the Terrapin.—Prof. LEIDY remarked that the habits of a naturalist often led him to observe things in our daily life which usually escape the notice of others. In our food he had frequent occasion to detect parasites which he preferred to reject but which are unconsciously swallowed by others. While he liked a herring, he never ate one without first removing the conspicuously coiled worms on the surface of the rows; and he had repeatedly extracted from a piece of black bass or a shad a thread worm which others would not distinguish from a vessel or a nerve. While he did not object to the little parasitic crab of the oyster, he made it a point to remove the equally frequent leech from the clam. It was in a piece of ham, he was eating, that he first

noticed the trichina, which was no doubt one of the causes that led Moses to declare the pig to be unclean; and in the hundred tape-worms he had examined, from our fellow citizens, during the past twenty five years, he had ascertained that they had all been derived from rare beef. He continued, in a visit to Charleston, S. C. before the late war, at an evening entertainment among other viands, were nicely browned slices of the drum-fish, *Pogonias chromis*. A friend informed him that some portions were more gelatinous and delicate than others and helped him to what was supposed to be one of such. On cutting into it he had observed imbedded in the flesh a soft mass which appeared of enigmatic character. The following day he procured from market a drum-fish on the dissection of which, he found imbedded in the tail several egg-shaped masses, about three inches long and less than an inch thick, which proved to be a large coiled worm, (*Acanthorhynchus reptans*).¹ This it was that gave delicacy to the dainty, and in this instance the parasite seems to enhance the excellence of the food. At another evening entertainment nearer home he partook of some stewed terrapins. Taking into his mouth what appeared to be an egg it produced such an impression as led to its rejection. Seeming so peculiar he tied it in the corner of his handkerchief for more convenient examination. The specimen, now exhibited, was a membranous bag which contained thirty yellowish white maggots from 8 to 12 mm long by 1.5 to 3 mm broad. They are the larvae of a bot-fly, and resemble those of the *Gastrophilus* of the horse. Their characters are as follow:—

Body of the larva fusiform, acute anteriorly, obtuse posteriorly, consisting of twelve segments including the head, which is armed with a pair of strong, black, hooked maxillae; terminal segment with a pair of trilateral oval, chitinous disks, each with three spiracles; intermediate segments with numerous minute recurved hooklets, disposed in incompletely separated bands at the fore and back part of the segments.

The sac containing the larvae is about three fourths of an inch long and half an inch broad, with a short tubular prolongation open at the extremity. It was uncertain whether the sac formed part of the intestine.

The dish of stewed terrapins was suspected to have been a mixture of the diamond-back, *Emys palustris* and the red-bellied terrapin *E. rugosa*. This is not the only instance of the occurrence of bots in turtles, as Prof. A. S. Packard notes the case of larvae being found in the skin of the neck of the box-turtle, *Cistudo carolina*.²

DECEMBER 20.

Mr. Geo. W. TRYON Jr. in the chair.

Twelve persons present.

¹ Proc. A. N. S. 1858, 111.

² American Naturalist, 1882, 598.